

Red-faced editor admits multi-million goof Viet oil 'plot' seen based on monumental error

By Bernard D. Nossiter
Washington Post

WASHINGTON — A flurry of articles, several congressional speeches and 10,000 letters and postcards from the California-based Another Mother for Peace (AMP) have recently suggested that the continuing American involvement in the Vietnam war is based on oil company plans for huge investments in purportedly oil-rich waters off South Vietnam.

The argument apparently is rooted in a rigidly economic determinist logic. It rests, in considerable part, on the arbitrary extension of South Vietnamese territory by about 400 miles and on an oil production "forecast" that has been inadvertently inflated by 100 times.

Whatever its weakness, the thesis has come as a godsend to the economic determinists who have never been happy with ideological or bureaucratic explanations of the war. The conflict, as they say, has lacked a significant economic constituency, a powerful group profiting on a large scale from the engagement.

Leading businessmen have openly opposed the war. The stock market, back in the days when a negotiated arrangement seemed plausible, perched on a peace rumor and fell when they were exploded. Even the aerospace industry is not entirely pleased with the war. Its executives complain that it diverts Pentagon money to expendable items and limits the demand for the electronically complicated gadgetry they design and sell.

The determinist peace forces discovered oil as an economic rationale with mingled indignation and delight.

Rep. Bella Abzug (D-N.Y.) warns the House of Representatives that oil companies intend to invest "billions of dollars" exploiting oil offshore from Vietnam. "It is inconceivable," she said the other day, "that the companies would not have consulted with the US government in determining their financial risk — consulted with them in determining the safety of their investment."

Mrs. Abzug and Rep. Jim Abourezek (D-S.D.) have both sternly called for an investigation — as Abourezek put it, an inquiry into "possible lease agreements between American oil companies and the Thieu-Ky government (that) will tie us into continued support of that specific government."

A key element in the literature underlying the oil-and-war thesis is an estimate attributed to the Aug. 15 issue of World Oil.

The Houston trade journal cited predictions that Southeast Asian waters — a huge area embracing the strait of Malacca, Gulf of Siam, South China Sea and the Java Sea — would yield a staggering 400 million barrels a day by 1975.

Among other places, the amazing forecast has reappeared in The Nation, The Village Voice, and an Atlas translation of an article by Joachim Joesten for Die Weltwoche, a Zurich weekly. It has gained further circulation by the reprinting of these articles in the Congressional Record.

The figure represents nearly nine times the entire world's current output of 46 million barrels and 40 times the US production alone.

The number is so mind-boggling it induced the staff of Sen. Phil A. Hart's Antitrust Subcommittee to write World Oil for its source. An abject editor, R. W. Scott, replied that the whole thing was a mistake, that a new staff member had picked it up from a United Press International story in the Houston Chronicle and it had slipped into his magazine without checking.

The UPI story out of Singapore appeared in the Chronicle on March 8, 1970, and attributed the 400-million-barrel forecast to James Gauntt, an American geologist. This week,

this reporter reached Gauntt in Singapore, and he said he had given UPI's man an estimate of 4 million, not 400 million. Even that is 60 percent more than editor Scott's guess and more than twice the 1.5 million now forecast by the leading oil bank, Chase Manhattan. But then, Gauntt sells oil rigs.

The known facts about oil prospects off Vietnam's shores are skimpy, but point to something much less exciting than the determinists suggest. Ten companies have made a joint aerial survey of the waters and concluded that prospects are "promising."

The Thieu government last December adopted a law that would open these waters for exploration on terms much like those in other parts of the world. A 12.5 percent royalty and a tax on profits ranging from 45 to 55 percent. (On March 6, the Far Eastern Economic Review, in an article that suggested Mr. Nixon might prolong the war to tap Vietnam's oil, pointed out that these terms in a risky area have made the companies unhappy.)

Not a drop of oil has yet been found in or offshore Vietnam. The government is expected to call for bids to explore in a few months.

Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, however, a genuine boom is developing. At least 41 groups of companies from nine nations, including all the great international firms, are looking for offshore oil and some strikes have been made off Indonesia. Exploration has also been undertaken off Malaysia. The waters between Taiwan and Japan are thought to be promising. A year ago, production off Indonesian shores was still below 100,000 barrels a day. But an increase to more than one million barrels daily in three years is frequently forecast.

The sharply rising world demand for oil, the mounting price claims of the Arab and other producing nations, and the low sulphur content of Southeast Asian Oil—a lure for increasing pollution-conscious Westerners and Japanese — have made the Southeast Asian waters a potentially rich prize.

Last year, David Rockefeller, chairman of the Chase Bank, estimated investment in the area would total \$35 billion for the decade of the 1970s.

This presumably is the source of the "billions" that Mrs. Abzug foresees for Vietnam. But Rockefeller was talking about the entire region, and his estimate included not only exploration and drilling, but refineries, pipelines, tankers and everything else for Japan and its neighbors. His estimate now would undoubtedly be even higher.

But the outlay in Vietnam, where no one can be

sure the present government will be in power in 5 to 10 years, when the first fruits of any exploration would be harvested, is a fraction of this total. One of the most important executives in a superlatively major international company has told this reporter that his firm will sink "a few million dollars" into Vietnam in the next years. The stockholders, he suggested, would rightfully rise up in wrath if more were risked.

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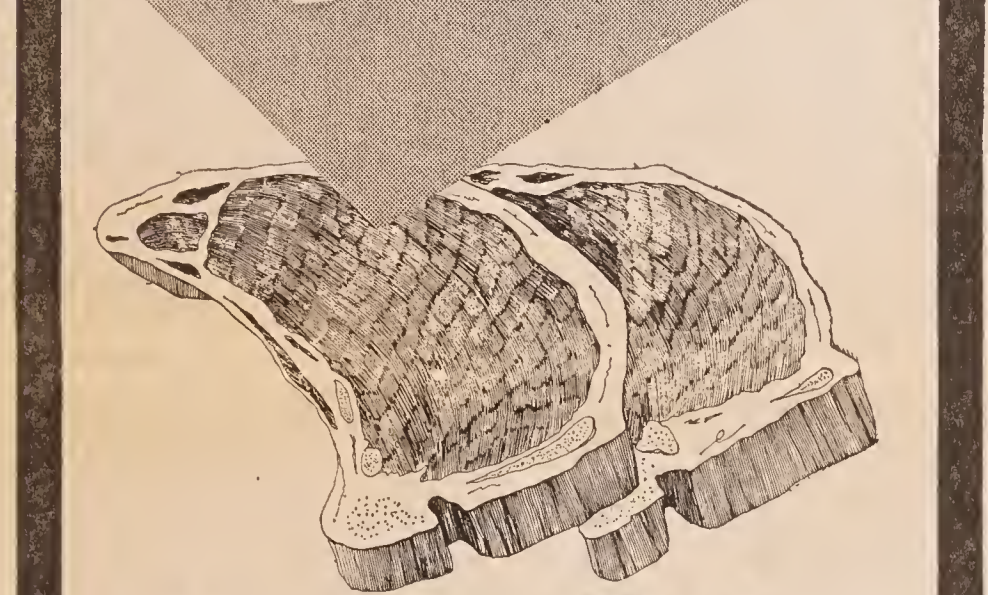


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Agent killing is admitted by former Green Beret

Associated Press

BLOOMFIELD, N.J. — Robert F. Marasco, a former captain in the US Special Forces in Vietnam, said Saturday night he shot and killed a South Vietnamese triple agent two years ago — a slaying he and others were accused of but never tried for.

The execution was carried out at the behest of the Central Intelligence Agency and with the knowledge of "our chain of command," Marasco said.

He said he shot the man twice in the head and, with two other officers, put him into a weighted sack and dumped him from a boat into the South China Sea on June 20, 1969.

Marasco said he came forward now, at the risk of prosecution for murder, because of his anger over the court-martial of Lt. William L. Calley Jr.

He said he killed the agent because "of orders that were given to me — orders that I felt were legal orders."



ROBERT MARASCO
... admits shooting

Marasco and seven others, including the Green Berets commander in Vietnam, Col. Robert B. Rheault, were accused by the Army of the slaying. The Army later dropped the charges, saying it did so because it was told that the CIA would not permit any of its men to testify at a trial.

While out of reach now of military prosecution, Marasco said "I'm open to having the charges brought against me again by civilian authority. That potential was always there. There is no statute of limitation.

He said he got conflicting advice from lawyers, but decided to speak because of "the Calley thing." "Not Calley himself," said Marasco, "but 'the Calley thing' — all the others who could follow him. This Calley thing should be the last one."

"My decision was based on my principles, my love for my country, for what it stands for and or what it was built for."

Fighting flares at Fire Base 6

Reuter

SAIGON — Heavy new fighting was reported today from the central highlands of South Vietnam, where at least 1422 North Vietnamese were said to have died as they flung themselves against a strategic fire base in a series of attacks.

In a separate battle on the eastern fringe of the highlands, seven Americans were killed and 38 wounded as troops of the 173d Airborne Brigade fought 10 hours and killed 12 Viet Cong. Two Americans were killed in the same area Friday.

Fire Base 6, a strategic artillery base located in northern South Vietnam near the three-country Indochina border was captured by North Vietnamese Thursday after they breached the perimeter and forced the defending South Vietnamese to flee. But the South Vietnamese regrouped and managed to retake the base after the area was laced with high explosives dropped by B-52 bombers. Five Americans — advisers to the South Vietnamese — were reported slain in the first Viet Cong attack.

(UPI reported B52s dumped approximately 100 tons of bombs early today on Communist forces besieging Fire Base 6.

(The bombers few from sanctuary bases in Thailand for the sixth time in five days to pound the Communist positions, UPI said.)

A government spokesman said that another 242 North Vietnamese had died in the latest attacks against Fire Base 6, bringing the total to 1422. He put Saigon casualties at 68 men dead and 104 wounded.

Fighting also was reported today from two other central highlands provinces, and a US helicopter was shot down. Full details were not immediately available.

The North Vietnamese toll at fire base 6 included 800 men who died Friday in either suicide charges or else while being caught by US air strikes in positions in the surrounding hills. Another 200 men were said to have died in South Vietnamese counterattacks.

A spokesman said the losses put North Vietnam's 28th Regiment completely out of action. A regiment normally has 2000 men.

Viet Cong mortar crews killed one person and wounded four yesterday in a new attack on the already ruined town of Duc Duc, military sources reported.

The district capital 25 miles southeast of Da Nang was virtually leveled Monday when an estimated 1500 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese raided the town, killing 100 civilians and 20 soldiers.

New generation in Soviet party

★ PARTY

Continued from Page 49

This balances the 5.9 percent of those over 60, a mere handful, who either participated in the Revolution or even remember it.

Less than 50 percent of the delegates are workers (1195) and farmers (870).

Three hundred and seventy represent the industrial managerial class. Professional party officialdom has 1205 delegates.

Layers and journalists are a tiny minority in contrast to political parties in the West.

The scientific and intellectual stratum is represented by 96 members of the Academy of Sciences, 363 holders of doctoral and other graduate degrees, 120 writers, artists, composers and educators.

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